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ABSTRACT

An ethnographic study examined and compared schooled and non-schooled uses of literacy and literature in a small, rural, all white, Adirondack Mountain community in upstate New York to explicate the way in which low social class and economic status constrain school achievement. More than 75 interviews were conducted over a 3-year period with students, teachers, school administrators, former students, parents, community members, and local employers. Observations were also conducted at graduations, holiday celebrations, faculty meetings, and the non-school classroom of hunters' safety training and snowmobile safety training. Results indicated that most of the families in the town are literate and are often involved with literacy during the course of their daily lives. Literacy is seen to exist within a social and cultural context, and its definitions are varied and changeable. People in the town understand what is required for academic achievement, but often choose not to pursue it. In both school and non-school settings, literacy is used for particular purposes, and there are specific demands placed by the community upon its members regarding specific texts. Although the school is arguably the best school in its section of the Adirondacks, family and peer influences, along with community norms, orchestrate a disengagement from schoolwork and from the pursuit of academic achievement as an avenue of social and economic mobility. (Contains 30 references. Appendixes present a chart representing student involvement in an "Animal Farm" unit, an Adirondack version of "The Marvelous Hunt," and 3 "amusement" texts.) (RS)

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Deborah Brandau

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Literacy and Literature
in
School and Non-School Settings

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Literacy and Literature in School and Non-School Settings

Deborah Brandau

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines and compares schooled and non-schooled uses of literacy and literature in a small, rural, Adirondack Mountain community in upstate New York. It reports on findings of an ethnographic study of schooling and work in a poor, all white town we call Somerville. Our research explores the relationships between patterns of adult work and the schooling of children, and between schooled and non-schooled uses of literacy, in an attempt to explicate the *way* in which low social class and economic status constrain school achievement. Disparity between schooled purposes and practices of literacy and those of non-schooled settings is just one of several areas of disjuncture between schooling and community context which emerged from the data.

Given the stubborn correlation of economic disadvantagement and school failure, despite years of attempts at intervention, it is likely that such attempts have suffered from inadequate understanding of the complex bond between economic and educational struggles. Much of traditional educational research heretofore, perhaps due to psychology's quantitative bent, has tended to isolate education, removing it from the social, historical, political, and economic scene of which it is a part (Apple, 1986). Building on the work of Lareau (1989), Heath (1983), and others, this study has taken an ethnographic approach in order to preserve the socio-economic and cultural realities of schooling in the case study community, while uncovering the complex interface between background factors and school practice.

More than 75 interviews were conducted over a three-year period with local participants, including students, teachers, and school administrators, as well as former students, parents, community members, and local employers. These many conversations focused on the perceived relationship between schooling and work, and on the relationship between the literacies of the local community and of the school. Six families were visited in their homes, while other family conversations took place at school and at community social events. School officials made classrooms and school records accessible, and the researcher was in the school almost daily during the fieldwork phase. Observations were made in elementary classes, Chapter I remedial reading, and eighth grade social studies and English classes, including the five-week literature unit detailed later in this paper. Observations were also conducted at various school and community events, ceremonies, and meetings, such as graduations, holiday celebrations, faculty meetings, and the non-school classrooms of hunters' safety training and snowmobile safety training.

Data were recorded using audio-tape and fieldnotes. Archival data were gathered from records at the local K-8 school and the high school, the county department of social services, the state department of economic development, and the local newspaper.

The Somerville case study community is made up of neither white collar nor traditional factory blue collar workers, but represents, rather, a third type of work community, a mixture of formal and informal sector workers. Most of the local people work in low paying jobs, many of them seasonal, and many combine jobs in what Halperin (1990) calls "multiple livelihood strategies." Often wage labor is combined with transfer payments, informal arrangements with family and neighbors, and living off the land as a way of providing for families. Fifty-two percent of the children in the local K - 8 school are eligible for free or reduced lunch, which indicates that their family incomes fall below the federal poverty guidelines (approximate monthly income for a family of four = $1450). The standard of living is low here, as evidenced by poor housing conditions, old cars in disrepair, and hand-me-downs being the most common clothes in school. Somerville students attend high school in a nearby small city, Williamstown, 18 miles away. Parents and other community members have frequent, positive contact with the local school, often centered around holiday festivities, athletic events and other non-academic functions. The school is seen as an important place for community gatherings, an institution central to people's sense of belonging, but there is little obvious concern with academic achievement among the people of Somerville. Our findings show that the relationships between family, community, work, and schooling are complex and are based on values and assumptions which, in some places, are vastly different from widely accepted mainstream views.

In order to provide a framework in which to view the Somerville data, we will begin with a brief consideration of the meaning of literacy in general. With this background in mind, we will then move to the school-sanctioned view and see how it plays out in a literature unit from the eighth grade at Somerville School. Analysis of the observed school unit is followed by contrasting examples of "real world" literacy and literature from the community. What is important and worthwhile about Somerville's rich tradition of stories and about community uses of reading and writing turns out to be quite different from criteria used to evaluate literacy practice in schools. The non-school classrooms, studied for their successful outcomes, present an unexpected lesson. The conclusion reconsiders the findings of this research in terms of community, in terms of intentionality, and finally, in terms of implications for the education of "at risk" students.

DEFINING LITERACY

Literacy has been and continues to be variously defined, ranging from a narrow focus on acts of reading and writing to the broader notion of thinking and reasoning in literate ways. Whatever the definition, literacy has always been associated, in one way or another, with social and political issues of power and participation.

At the simplest level, the right to vote has hinged on the ability to read and write one's name. At the level of Langer's (1987) "sociocognitive view," literacy includes the ability to bring prior learning to bear on solving new problems, using language to extend knowledge, or, as described by the National Assessments of Educational Progress (1986), the use of written information to function in society to achieve one's goals and develop one's knowledge and potential. Certainly, literacy must be viewed as a social practice, rather than a set of skills, which varies according to the particular use made of it in each context.

Before the development of mass schooling, such authors as Thomas Paine produced radical, subversive texts through which popular literacy supported political ferment. In response to this social unrest, the nineteenth century saw the creation of a system of public education charged with instilling moral order and useful knowledge—literacy used to support the status quo. Collins describes this shift, and the ensuing development of the notion of schooled literacy:

> We see in this history a transformation of literacy: from a plurality of scriptal practices embedded in a commonplace working-class culture of political dissent, to a unified conception and execution, centered on the school, with deviations from the school norm attributed to deficiencies and deviations in working-class homes, communities, and minds" (Collins, 1991, p.232)

Consideration of literacy, particularly as it has been construed most recently, provokes the question of literature. If we think of literature as the artifacts of literacy, it must include written materials across the spectrum from "literary" texts which, in the schooled view, ". . . become literary when a reader chooses to read them as aesthetic objects rather than as documents" (Purves, 1990, p.4), to the smallest scraps which mediate everyday uses of reading and writing. Increasingly, even oral texts are part of the range of possibilities considered for designation as literature (Shuman, 1986; Tannen, 1984; Bauman, 1986). As with literacy generally, literature belongs to particular communities which determine what counts, what is worthwhile, and what will be rewarded.

Purves (1990) details the development of a literary canon for schools as the product of a community of "knowledgeable and experienced readers," who have selected a group of texts to be read aesthetically. As these texts are set aside by communities, they form a part of the communal experience, and subsequent writers acculturated into this tradition use them as the core upon which other texts are built (Purves, 1990, p.4). Since ways of thinking appropriate to a particular culture are learned, the notion of community is critical, not only for discussion of schooled literacy, where the community context is the school (Atwell, 1987; Purves, 1990), and non-schooled literacy, the purview of the community outside the school (Shuman, 1986; Heath, 1983), but especially for comparing the two. In both school and non-school settings, literacy is comprised of many uses of thought and language, through their various representations (literature), for particular purposes.

In both settings there are particular demands placed by the community upon its members regarding specific texts. In both settings, there are certain ways for reading certain texts, and readers become culturally indoctrinated into a way of reading literature that they apply to new texts that they read. In fact, they can become frustrated if the text does not match the methodology they have acquired (Purves, 1990). Of course, the school community and the outside local community are intertwined so that each exists within the other. Schooled and non-schooled activities, then, must be considered as matters of intent, rather than of location.

Purves has found that literature education is aimed at providing the student with the requisite knowledge of the communal canon, as well as with the ways of reading that preserve the appropriate view of the functions of text in the (school) community. He describes the schooled approach to literature as including not only the literary texts themselves, but a set of accessory conceptions as well:

> There are four other broad areas of literature content: historical and background information concerning authors, texts, and the times in which they were written or that form their subject matter; information concerning critical terminology, critical strategies, and literary theory; information of a broad cultural nature such as that emerging from folklore and mythology which forms a necessary starting point for the reading of many literary texts; and the set of critical strategies, procedures, dispositions, and routines that the community values. (Purves, 1990, p.5)

Accordingly, literature instruction in school represents induction into the academic literary community. These elements of the literature curriculum are seen, to some degree, in the following presentation of the Somerville unit on *Animal Farm* (Orwell, 1946), and are even more evident among other curricular materials gathered from the Somerville School and the English department at Williamstown High School.

Findings from Somerville suggest that, while there are many parallels to be drawn between uses of literacy and literature inside and outside of school, the knowledge, practice, and preferred habits in non-school settings differ sharply from schooled approaches in fundamental ways. There is an obvious contrast between the large body of interdependent canonical texts called literature in schools and the widely divergent conglomeration of materials associated with the practice of literacy outside of school. More important, real-life purposes, expectations, and strategies for literacy tasks, are very different from those valued in school.

Exploration of non-schooled literacy and literature in Somerville shows that book reading is primarily done during inactive phases of life: by men when they have retired, by women when they are "stuck at home with the kids," and by people who are convalescing or trapped indoors by weather that is too bad for outdoor activity. Many Somerville residents report that the daily paper is the only thing they ever read. The majority of reading materials of choice in the community have the express purpose of supporting things that people do, both vocationally and recreationally, for example, magazines about hunting, trucking, sports, cooking, and crafts.

The reading of magazines cuts across age and gender groups, and probably represents both information-seeking and an imaginative consideration of wider possibilities, within existing categories of practical life: hunting, trucking, crafts, and so forth. This might be construed as imaginative, or pleasure reading in the guise of practical utility. The kinds of texts and what is important about them are widely disparate in schooled and non-schooled settings.

SCHOOLED LITERACY: A LESSON FROM SOMERVILLE EIGHTH GRADE ENGLISH

The *Animal Farm* unit in eighth grade English class was part of the whole language, literature-based curriculum in place K - 8 the last few years. The unit took about six weeks from introduction to concluding test, and included a variety of activities to supplement the reading and discussion of the text. Several class sessions were observed and recorded through audiotape and fieldnotes and the teacher and some students were interviewed, focusing on purposes and outcomes of class activities, as well as amount and type of student participation and reaction to the text under study. In some cases, the teacher taped lessons for later discussion with the researcher. She also provided copies of study guide questions, homework materials, and samples of student writing, and was a willing and helpful participant in analysis and review of the unit.

There were 22 students in the group, which, like all classes at Somerville, is heterogeneous, there being only one section at each grade level. The group included two mainstreamed special education students (LD) as well as 5 students recently brought in from outside the district. Several of these were "imports" placed in the district because of serious problems. While transcripts of class discussions don't always show the effects of class make-up, observation notes reveal disruptions, both small and large scale, often attributable to the ecology of the classroom, which sets the conditions within which literature is studied and schoolwork is done. Since each type of data offers different kinds of evidence, audio transcripts used in combination with observation notes and interview data allow for a thorough analysis of what is going on in this eighth grade English classroom.

Unit Overview

The teacher's self-reported plan for the unit had as its primary focus the issues of classroom community and power structure, to be considered in light of *Animal Farm*, Russia, and any other communities raised in discussion. The secondary focus was on historical connections to the Russian Revolution. Ms. L. characterized her literary foci as major (including characterization and theme), and minor (satire). A few days were spent on introduction, during which the teacher gave students notes on the Russian Revolution and the growth of communism, featuring beliefs, events, and important people.

She allotted five weeks to guided reading of the text with accompanying assignments, and completion of related activities.

Assignments included five study guide questions per chapter to prepare for discussion and several exercises focused on such concepts as cause and effect, propaganda, author's use of characters, etc. Activities were developed around the themes of the classroom community, and power and leadership, and included naming the community, creating speeches and slogans to elect a "supreme leader," writing news articles and creating propaganda. Students engaged in spirited discussions as they designed their own seven commandments for the school community, analogous to the commandments in *Animal Farm*. One week of follow-up included viewing the animated film of *Animal Farm*, reading an essay, "On Shooting An Elephant," by George Orwell, and writing a short story about the students' own community using dialogue and personification.

Observation

Examining the transcript of classroom audiotape and supporting data reveals the teacher's strategy for this unit to consist of building prior knowledge, walking students through the text, and attempting to explore thematic concepts by relating the text to the students' own experience vis-a-vis the school community. After giving the students factual information on the Russian Revolution, Ms. L. had them listen to the song "Have You Seen the Little Piggies," from the Beatles' *White Album*. Her stated intent for these introductory activities was to enrich their background knowledge and establish a mind-set for "pigs personified," as well as to broach the issue of power in social arrangements.

Several pages of classroom transcript reveal changing patterns of dialogue and participation as the focus of discussion moves from getting the facts straight through activities based on students' own experience to more complex issues of character motivation and underlying theme. While there is always a "back and forth" between teacher and students, the number of participants and the length of comments in turn-taking varies considerably. For example, in the early discussion of plot, characters, and key events, many students participate in equal turns with the teacher as she asks for volunteers to tell about what they've read so far and characters they remember.

T: Alright. Volunteers to tell me about the characters they remember from what they've read so far, even if you can just remember what they were.

(few talking)

Boys: Dogs, dogs . . .

T: Sh . . . Heather?

Heather: The pig. (laughter)

(few talking)

T: The pig. Do you think it's named "The Pig?"

Girl: No, well . . . (laughter)

T: Tell me a little about it.

Girl: He died. (laughter)

T: A dead pig.

(few talking)

Stu: How did he die?

T: What do you think he died of?

1Stu: Old age. He died, it was a very quiet death.

2Stu: Stress.

3Stu: He was sleeping.

T: Alright, with us guys?

Boy: Huh?

T: Alright.

Stu: Jones

T: Anybody know the pig's name that died of old age?

Several: Major!

Boy: Oh that's right. I remember.

Girl: It's a boar.

T: Okay, yes, it's a boar.

Boy: He's the main character in the first chapter.

T: Alright. Alright, another character? Okay, another one.

Boys: Mr. Jones.

T: Alright. Tell me a little bit about him.

1Stu: He's human.

2Stu: He's a drunk farmer most of the time.

T: Alright. Another character? Jay?

Jay: Napoleon.

T: Okay, Napoleon, what was he?

1Stu: A pig.

2Stu: A drunk pig.

T: Okay, another pig.

Stu: Snowball.

T: Okay, anything about his personality that you can remember?

Boy: It didn't say much about it 'til (unt.)

Jay: I think he was the shy one, he wasn't a real good speaker.

(few talking)

Stu: No, that was Snowball. Snowball and Squealer too.

T: Okay, so Snowball you're saying is . . .

Girl: Wasn't a good speaker, we'll say.

T: And how about Napoleon?

Stu: He's a good speaker.

T: Okay, we're gonna call him a good speaker. Similar to Major, or different you think?

Stu: Different.

T: In what manner?

Stu: He's younger. (low chuckles)

T: O.K. He's younger.

Boy: He's not that (unt.)

T: His manner of speaking, any other impression of him yet in terms of . . .

Stu: No.

T: Not yet? Okay.

Stu: What about Squealer?

T: Squealer?

Stu: Very persuasive.

T: Okay, good. Well as long as we have the pigs up, I say this is a perfect time for something that I brought in for you to listen to you today. How many people are familiar with the Beatles' *White Album*?

The discussion captured in this transcript deals only with the first two chapters and is confined to the level of literal comprehension and recall, and questions are answered by single words or simple phrases. As Ms. L. plays a tape of the Beatles' song about "piggies," stopping at strategic intervals for discussion, many students still participate in relatively equal turn-taking to talk about images gleaned from listening. Here answers are just slightly longer than in the first section, and the teacher sometimes expands or elaborates on student comments. This piece is offered as a metaphor, a counterpart from a different media source, to the text under study. Toward the end of the discussion of the tape, the teacher leads students to draw a connection to *Animal Farm*:

Several: Big piggies. No, it said little piggies.

T: And big piggies too. Little piggies and big piggies, what are the little piggies doing?

Stu: Playing in the dirt.

T: What are the big piggies doing?

Stu: Playing in the dirt with starched white shirts.

T: Okay, we have the little piggies playing in the dirt, we have big piggies in starched white shirts. What kind of an image do you get of the big piggies?

1Stu: They're bullies.

2Stu: Adults.

T: Why do you say bullies?

Stu: Cause they're wearing clothes.

T: They're wearing clothes, but I don't know if that makes them bullies.

Stu: The leaders.

T: It's interesting, We'll look at that idea again later, when we're reading *Animal Farm*. Okay, you get the idea that they're the leaders? Why?

Stu: Cause they're wearing starched white shirts, and they're not dirty and they're playin' in the mud.

T: Okay, clean white shirts, so we get the image of leadership, and the little piggies are doing what again?

Stu: Playing in the dirt.

T: Alright, what else did the big piggies do? Catch any others? Alright, listen to this again.

Boy: Did I hear something about hair (Unt.) or something.

T: There is something like that. Okay, listen again. Try to listen for what you hear about little piggies and what you hear about big piggies.

(trying to find on tape)

Boy: It has something to do with (unt.) and three big piggies, then they're bustin' on the little piggies.

T: OK Tina, heads down. Frank . . .

(tape)

T: What are the little piggies doing?

Stu: (unt.) climbing the stairs.

T: Okay.

(tape)

T: OK Stephanie, I'm picking on you next.

T: And their sties with all their backing, they don't care what goes on around. What impression does that give you?

Stu: (low) They're powerful.

T: They're more powerful. (Tape) There's more that I want you to get out of this.

T: What do they do with their piggy wives?

Stu: Eating dinner.

T: Okay, they're going out to dinner with their piggy wives, and they're using forks and knives, and what are they having for dinner?

(tape: "to eat their bacon")

Stu: Bacon.

T: What are they having for bacon (unt.) and stuff?

Stu: The little piggies.

T: Bacon, bacon. What kind of impression are you getting from these big piggies.

Stu: They're cannibals.

T: Okay, cannibalism comes to mind. Alright. They're concerned with the little piggies?

Stu: No.

T: Do they take the little piggies out and feed them the bacon?

Stu: No, they eat the little piggies.

T: Okay, I'm not really gonna say much else about this now. If you can tell me anything else . . . Why did I play this for you? What does this have to do with the book?

(few talking)

Stu: The big piggies,

(few talking)

1Stu: The big piggies are taking care of themselves.

2Stu: They don't care about the lower classes of pigs.

T: Okay, can you draw a connection to *Animal Farm*?

Stu: Yes, the pigs don't care about the other animals.

T: Do you think you have the right idea?

Stu: No, no, it's with the animals and Mr. Jones.

T: Do the big pigs represent Mr. Jones?

Stu: Yeah, and the animals are the little pigs. But if you go on, Napoleon will represent the big piggies.

T: Okay, we have Napoleon being power. Tye, what do you think that means?

(low)

Stu: Napoleon (low)

T: Alright, keep these images in mind as you read chapters three and four. What happened in chapter two? Action wise, the big event?

Here, the teacher has been successful in leading students to shape their observations into a point she wants made. (It is often the case, however, that student comments are confined to specifics and, despite valiant efforts and repeated modelling, the teacher is unable to coax them to move toward generalizations.)

Having set the stage, the teacher puts forth a complex task for the students, calling for integrative thinking and synthesis of what she has tried to ensure they already know with the new information she hopes they are about to encounter:

T: Alright, so as you continue reading this, keep these things in mind, the image of the big piggies, and the little piggies that you heard on the album, and again, personalities of some of the people involved, and the notes that I gave you on the Russian Revolution. If you'll look those over as you're reading, they may give you a little insight into what may happen on *Animal Farm*, as things begin to change. Alright. You have a little bit of time to continue reading, no questions this week. So continue reading chapter four and we'll discuss some of the action in more detail tomorrow. Those of you who haven't started please begin.

Discussion of the text continues to be teacher-driven, and as the plot becomes more developed and complex there is a decrease in the number of students volunteering relevant comments. The balance between teacher talk and student talk also shifts with Ms. L.'s comments becoming longer and more diverse as she seems to work very hard at clarifying the text and keeping the dialogue going. Three students emerge as the "ball-carriers," who do their part to keep things going. It is obvious that Dan, Darrell and Anne have read the text, and, even more important, that they understand and are willing to take part in the "official script" of classroom interaction. Sometimes they engage in rather substantive exchanges with Ms. L. Here, Anne offers an explanation of the disappearance of the milk, and its significance :

T: Alright, it disappeared. And we find out later in chapters three and four, what happened to the milk, Anne?

Anne: The pigs drank it, because they said that the pigs need these things to survive, and since the pigs are important, it's right to give it to them. And everybody agreed on it.

T: Okay, it went to the pigs then, and eventually everyone did agree on it. But first of all, and this is sort of important. First of all, it wasn't agreed upon, it just kind of disappeared, and they found out later what happened to it, and then they found out why. So that sequence is important. Alright, also, in chapter three, they begin their first harvest without Mr. Jones. How does it go?

Boy 1: Very good

Boy 2: Great.

T: Tell me a little bit about that, Dan.

Dan: It was the best one they ever had. And nobody took anything.

T: Okay, no one is stealing, and it was the best harvest ever. How were they able to come up with a bigger harvest this time than before?

Dan: Because they had the animals with the really good eyesight and they got every single thing.

Both Dan and Darrell do a fair amount of fooling around with their friends but always manage to keep one ear tuned to the teacher so that they can provide the correct answer when nobody else comes up with it, in order to keep things running smoothly. A revealing section of transcript centers around a discussion of the purpose and value of education, which is part of the larger discussion of changes taking place on *Animal Farm*. Here we see many participants and somewhat unequal turns, as the teacher tries to steer the conversation in the direction of attitudes towards, and benefits of, universal education. Darrell has just mentioned the re-education committee of wild animals:

T: Okay. Wild comrades re-education committee. Alright, there's the egg production committee for the hens, the clean tails league for the cows, the whiter wool movement for the sheep. There were classes in reading and writing. Were these successful projects?

Dan: No.

T: Why do you think these were not successful?

Boy: Weren't smart enough.

T: Alright, some of the animals weren't smart enough, in terms of the reading and writing. But that wasn't the only factor. There were other things besides simply animals that were not smart enough. Boxer wasn't smart enough. What was he only able to learn when they tried to teach him to read and write.

Boy: Letter D

T: He got to about letter D and then he would forget, and maybe he would learn four more letters, okay, and then he would forget those, and then he would learn again, A, B, C, D, that's as far as he could ever get. Alright. But there were other animals, like the dog, they were able to learn to read, but / /

Boy: They couldn't write 'cause they couldn't hold pencils.

T: Why didn't the dogs continue to read? Do you remember why the dogs didn't continue to read?

Boy: They couldn't turn the pages.

T: No. They thought there wasn't anything worth reading. Alright, and some of the other animals had different reasons. The dogs weren't interested in anything except the seven commandments. Muriel could read. She was the goat, and from time to time she would read the newspaper on the rubbish scraps. Benjamin could read as well as any pig. But he said there's nothing worth reading. Alright, and he didn't really care about that. Molly refused to learn anything but the six letters in her name, and she liked to put them out in the sand, and decorate them with flowers, and that's all she wanted to learn. Why do you think Snowball wanted everyone to be able to read and write? . . (pause) . . . Well what, why do we educate our society? Why do we all go to school?

Boy: 'Cause we're smarter and they can live longer.

Girl: And pass it on.

T: Alright.

(few talking)

Girl: When the smarter animals die, then there'll be someone that's smart enough to run things.

T: Alright. That could be a possibility. But we're also not just educating one class of people, just the pigs for example, which seem to be the brightest of all, but we're going to educate everyone. Why? Just like in the United States we do that. We force you to go to school. You don't really have any choice. You have to be educated.

Brian: It's no fair.

T: Why are we doing that, you poor people?

Brian: It's stupid!

Dan: So we can run the country.

T: So that we can have a well run country? So that we have bright educated people working for us?

Brian: Nah!

Here, as Dan acknowledges the mainstream ideal that an educated populace is necessary for a well-run country, Brian participates vocally with his opinion that compulsory education is an imposition. Ms. L.'s attempt to get at attitudes toward reading and education in mentioning the dogs meets with a response focused on the physical attributes of dogs rather than on the answer from the text. She reaches further, mentioning Molly and Benjamin, but none of the students pick up on the idea of being capable but disinterested, rejecting reading because of attitudes rather than inability.

This discussion closely parallels one that took place on another day when students were engaged in developing their own set of commandments for the school community. This interchange featured many participants and the conversation ranged from unruly shouting to hand-raising and turn-taking. Anne suggested rules for making sure the school continues to be successful, "like make sure everyone keeps at least an 85 average. Or maybe just *keep* those with an 85 average." She was angrily shouted down by several students who said averages don't matter and, "it's stupid to have averages anyway. Grades don't tell how smart you are anyway! Grades are stupid!"

Animated interaction finally led to the list of commandments below. It is worth noting that students' suggestions for commandments focused on specific perceived abuses. For example, commandment #6 was proposed as "No one will throw the trays at you," which was a reference to an unfriendly cafeteria worker who shoved the lunch trays. The teacher led them to generalize with "Students will be treated with respect," but generalizing was not something they adopted for their own practice.

COMMANDMENTS

1. Anyone who is employed by the school district is an enemy.
2. Anyone who is a student is a friend.
3. No student shall give homework.
4. No student shall lecture.
5. No student may put any limitations on our freedoms.
6. No student shall be treated with disrespect.
7. All grade 8 students preside over the student body.

Disrespect seemed more recognizable than respect. For students, like the pigs, it was easier to conceptualize avoiding known badness than achieving an ideal, and therefore, unknown goodness. In other words, this format seemed easier for them to relate to than many typically seen in school, particularly in English class, which may account for the enthusiastic participation of almost the whole class.

Some students were able to make the shift from banning negatives to advocating positives when they divided into self-selected groups to create campaign platforms for the mock election of a supreme leader. While some repeated the commandment format and planned to run on such promises as "no bald-headed teachers," a group of girls included in their list of important issues "better food," and "better boys." Brian's group decided "it would be good if you could wear anything you want." A bit of probing revealed that this was a reference to "obscene tee shirts," which the principal doesn't allow.

Observation notes show varying levels and kinds of participation in the above group activity, where students were to select a candidate and come up with a platform. Following, as it did, a rather lackluster discussion of relation of plot elements to theme and the author's use of characters, a text-centered activity during which participation was minimal, it took awhile for students to warm to the task, as indicated by their opening remarks:

Frank (Group 1): We all gotta think of stuff.

Steph (Group 2): What are we s'posed to be doing?

Dan (Group 3): All in favor of Matt, say aye.

As soon as Brian's group had come up with one idea, two of them left their seats and went over to pester Steph's group. Soon they hurried back to their seats grinning, with the girls shouting, "Watch your mouth! Shut up! That's disgusting!"

One girl (a recent "import") stood near the bulletin board naming class members as she pointed out animal pictures in the display. When nobody seemed to notice her, she shouted, "Hey! Who stole my wallet?" Getting no response, she began to complain that she needed to go to the bathroom, feigning great desperation. One boy sat with his head down and appeared to be almost asleep. As it began to rain hard outside, another boy seated near the window looked out and said, to no one in particular, "Gonna be good night-crawlin' tonight!" Meanwhile, the teacher circulated, telling groups they had to write down five ideas before they left.

More than half the class was involved in creating and recording ideas for the groups. The rest watched or did something else. This activity fell somewhere between the full participation of drafting the commandments, where all students seemed ready and willing to dream and argue, and the waning participation in class discussions of the literary aspects of the text itself, where many students were often doing something else, and some students became quick to volunteer, almost boastfully, that they didn't know the answers to the teacher's questions ("Can't say as I do!" and "I haven't the faintest idea!") as though it boosted their status in the eyes of their peers.

Analysis

It is possible to see a pattern in the complex web of student responses to various parts of this unit of instruction. On the face of it, there appears to be a wavelike pattern, similar to a sine curve, between the peaks and valleys of student involvement, corresponding to how closely tied each part of the unit is to the text (Appendix A). This has been noted by Ms. L. and other teachers who cite the seemingly perverse tendency of students to join in and even "shine" on supplementary activities while returning to a "dormant" state when the subject of study returns to the text. One teacher expressed it as a matter of momentum and coaxing. "Just when you think you have their interest with a great activity and you try to use that interest to turn their attention back to the book, it's as though they can smell a rat, and all your momentum dies." What can we learn from the apparent pattern of student participation varying inversely with the degree to which the text and its literary aspects are the focal point of an activity? Toward this end, it is useful to think of the *Animal Farm* text (and probably most classroom literature) as comprising three distinct aspects.

I will call these aspects the *fact text*, the *literary text*, and the *auxiliary text*. By *fact text*, I mean simply the factual elements, the characters, setting, and events of the story, easily accessible to everyone by reading, or listening to class discussions. I use the term *literary text* to include such elements as theme, characterization, and style, and the elaborate teacher—and text—focused process required to access them. The guided listening to the Beatles' song "Piggies," the debate over the purpose and value of education, and the drafting of the new commandments are parts of what I have termed the *auxiliary text*, a set of discursive practices through which students interact with the issues of power and social arrangements through immediate experience, with no sustained reading required. Students have shown that they are willing to relate to and explore the *fact* and *auxiliary* texts, as well as the relationship between the two. They willingly, even enthusiastically engage in considering values and concerns which are based on everyday life and immediate experience, that is to say those that are not text (book) driven. Students were eager to enumerate perceived injustices in their own community and establish rules of social order to address them. It should be noted that their concern with rules focused on righting injustices, but not necessarily on being fair to all. In any case, their interest stopped short of drawing generalizations. Some had strong opinions about the purpose and value of education in their own lives, but most showed no interest in talking about the "official script," or what Mickelson calls the "abstract value" widely accepted for mainstream society. The variation in willingness to be involved with the three aspects of text is consistent with the analysis of the structure of social and work arrangements in Somerville vis-a-vis mainstream America (see Brandau, 1993) Research in Somerville has shown it to be a community with flat, or non-hierarchical social and work arrangements, which stress control of one's time and resources, importance of place and family network, and the ability to adapt to shifting situations. By contrast, the more mainstream middle-class achievement ideology inherent in school and work is based on anticipation of the climb up through hierarchical ranks of social mobility and job-career arrangements, where credentials and performance standards are the name of the game.

The *literary text* and the cumulative process of accessing it are analogous to the hierarchical shape of things in mainstream understandings of schooling and work. The *fact text* and *auxiliary texts*, with their easy access and immediacy, can be compared to the more flat arrangements of work in poor, rural areas like Somerville. Further, students' willingness to be interested and involved in activities stemming from these other texts, just as long as the literary text is not the guiding force, parallels my finding of the community's willingness to be involved with the school, but on their own terms, not those of the establishment, not with an academic focus. Somerville people see the school as an important social gathering place and participate enthusiastically in school events centered around holiday festivities, sports, and other non-academic functions. They demonstrate little concern, however, with academics. As surely as the school community exists within the Somerville community-at-large, that outside community exists within the school as well.

NON-SCHOOLED LITERACY IN SOMERVILLE

Findings indicate that most Somerville families are literate and are often involved with literacy during the course of their daily lives. This is in keeping with Heath's (1983) report of literacy activities in one black and one white rural working-class community in the Piedmont region of the Carolinas. Heath found that literacy was used in these communities for various purposes: instrumental, social-interactional, recreational, news-related, confirmational, memory aids, substitution for oral messages, and financial. Anderson and Stokes (1983) investigated literacy practices among black, white, and Mexican-American families in southern California and found, similarly, that literacy activities were carried out across nine domains: daily living, entertainment, school-related, religion, general information, work, literacy techniques and skills, interpersonal communication, and story-book time. Two categories might be added to those above, based on the reports of Somerville respondents: use of reference materials, consulted for specific information; and pursuit of approval, prestige, or authority status by showing ownership of certain publications. In the first case, "use of reference materials" is used to mean "looking up," as opposed to "reading about." In the second, parents showed collections of children's books as evidence of providing support for school learning, and others offered auto manuals or expensive magazine subscriptions as signs of seriousness or expertise in chosen domains.

Heath (1983) and others have pointed to the fact that mainstream families use literacy, in addition to the above ways, in educational and expository ways as well. This, presumably, makes the transition to schooled literacy easier than it is for minority and non-mainstream children, not only in primary grade instruction, but also in the long view, where pursuit of schooled literacy is the means to social and economic mobility. While "essayist," or schooled, literacy is a form of discourse that isn't "natural" for increasing numbers of non-mainstream students, it continues to be used as a gatekeeping mechanism in education and other institutions in our society (Farr, 1990).

The disparity between schooled and non-schooled literacy goes beyond the characteristics of the artifacts, and, where book reading is involved, beyond the selection of titles. It has to do with purpose and orientation, and with local preferences based on understandings developed within particular sets of economic and social arrangements. When Somerville people are involved with literacy outside of school, on their own terms, what does it look like?

Reading

Sampling non-schooled uses of literacy and literature was a common corollary of observations and interviews, and artifacts of literacy activities were shown and given to me by parents, teachers, and students. Asked about real life uses of reading and writing, most Somerville people said they read the local newspaper and occasional magazines. Some subscribe to magazines; for example, B.E., said his subscription to "Billboard" cost $95.00 a year, but most buy them at the store. Now the father of two Somerville fifth-graders, B.E. "left school," as he said, when regular attendance became "too much of a hassle. It was a convenience thing with me. Ya know what I'm saying?" He has a job in the billing department at the hospital ("It's only part-time.") and works as a sound man for local bands on weekends. Reading on his own time is for information gathering.

B.E.: Not "Downbeat." I read "Guitar Player" and "Billboard." If you want to know what's going to be a hit, it's in there. I don't read novels—just magazines. If there's something I want to know, I look it up. I even go to the library.

At the mention of using the library as a resource, B.E. smiles and crouches slightly, acting out embarrassment. This is subtle acknowledgment that library use is not common in his neck of the woods. Use of reference materials, however, is not unusual, ranging from "Chilton's," a thick, hard-cover auto manual cited by several male respondents, to "Beckett's," a monthly baseball card publication. Respondents frequently cited the "Want Ad Digest" and "TV Guide" as habitual reading materials. There are also a number of widely consulted books and pamphlets associated with deer hunting, among them the "Big Game Recovery Guide," "Boone and Crocket's," a rating guide for trophy buck based on size and spread of antlers, and a full length how-to book called *Adirondack Deer Hunting* (Alsheimer & Watkins, 1987). Such references are generally owned and kept at home, and occasionally brought to school and shared, not borrowed from or consulted at the library. The Boy Scout Manual is seen regularly in sixth grade free reading time, as some boys choose to find out about badge requirements rather than read other texts. Two families showed me partial sets of encyclopedia, given to the children by their grandparents and obtained as a premium with grocery store purchases. The nearest public library is the one in Williamstown, eighteen miles away.

A conversation in the Somerville beauty shop expressed views typical of respondents who talked about pleasure reading of books. The beautician, V.S., offered that she reads "Danielle Steele novels, thick romances, and magazines." A.V., from the log cabin up at Stone Lake, said she never reads anything. "As for books, even magazines, I'd rather knit or crochet, or watch T.V." But her husband reads Louis L'Amore novels.

A.V.: He's read just about all of 'em. Matter of fact, whenever we go to Jamesway that's the first place he goes is right to the books.

D.B.: He buys them in paperback?

A.V.: Some. Some he gets at garage sales. He likes westerns. The first one he ever read was *Lonesome Dove*. He picked that one because of the picture on the cover. But he liked it and now he's read it three times and we've watched the movie a couple times.

D.B.: What does he do?

A.V.: He's a carpenter. . . Jack of all trades master of none. He used to be service manager at (auto dealership in the Mohawk valley). How he got into reading was when we first came up here—he quit that job—well, there were some problems. . . disagreements. He said reading relaxed him. I don't know if I'm saying myself right.

V.S.: Sure. You're in somebody else's world with their problems instead of your own.

A.V.: I've read the Nate Rocker book. (Local hero from Revolutionary War days. Statue on monument at Somerville)

V.S.: You mean the Somerville book?

A.V.: No, Nate Rocker. . . about his life. I've looked at parts of the Somerville book. Just the parts I was interested in, you know.

V.S.: I read cook books. I could just sit and read cookbooks.

A.V.: Not me. I never do.

Relaxation and escape from one's own situation and daily problems are common reasons given by readers for enjoying time spent in reading books, especially romances (Radway, 1984). The approach mentioned by A.V. of looking at parts of books, "just the parts I was interested in," was one mentioned frequently by students who experienced difficulty with, or dropped out of, high school. Aside from assigned books they disliked and didn't read, some former students were able to remember a few books they thought were "pretty good," or even "excellent." But, even with books they liked, they reported reading only certain parts. Perhaps one reason for the preference of magazine reading is that it typically consists of browsing, "just looking through to see what's there," and allows personal selection of parts to be read. People often said they had no time for reading books themselves, but some, like R.G., took time to read to their children, and several said their children had "lots of books."

R.G.: I never sit down long enough. Articles in magazines . . . that's about it . . . I read to (his son, who comes to stay with him on weekends). You know...stories. Now we're into bigger books. You know, I figured this, I started him out earlier reading, I'd always read to him before he went to bed, or before he took a nap, a little kid's story book. But now . . .

D.B.: Did he bring them with him, or did you have them?

R.G.: I got them.

D.B.: Where did you get them?

R.G.: Stores.

D.B.: So he would own them.

R.G.: Oh, yeah. He has a whole bunch of books.

R.G. was one of several parents who showed me a collection of hard-cover children's books belonging to their children. Some were children's stories and some were adaptations of classics. Like most Somerville parents who spoke with me, R.G. had a sense of the importance of early reading for children, and felt that, by providing it, he was helping to support school learning. He was comfortable with the notion of book reading confined to the realm of small children.

While many Somerville respondents reported doing little reading, the I. family was among those with a wide array of reading interests. Jim I. was a high school graduate, and Nicole I. had dropped out and gone back for her GED last year at age 35. She tells her five children, ages 12 - 18, to stay in school and finish, because "it's really hard to go back." As we sat around their dining room table and talked, Mrs. I. quickly listed favorite reading materials for each family member.

N.I. Well, every night it's the same thing between Jim and I—fight over the paper—who gets to read it first . . . then there's Stephen King and John Sowle . . . Gramma reads all the Danielle Steele, and V.C. Andrews, the whole series . . . and "Dirtrider Magazine," car and 4-wheel drive magazines . . . the twins love the Babysitter Club books . . . sporting magazines, old car books . . . Jim's into restoration, so he likes to read those old car books. Then J.(oldest daughter) likes the fashion magazines, "Seventeen," "Young Miss," right J.? What else do you read?

J.I.: Horoscopes. I like to read them horoscopes. (Laughs)

N.I. I like to read about sports figures. You know, their lives . . . just everything about them. 'Course when it's football season, I'd rather just sit and watch football and not read anything.

When I arrived for this interview, Mr. I. and two of his children were just returning from the general store with a 6 pack of cola and 2 packages of cookies. They put these out on the table, and the whole family sat down with me, except two of the girls, who were babysitting. The youngest, 12-year-old R., carried the latest issue of "BMX Bike Magazine," which he read during the entire interview, although he listened to us talk, and piped in occasionally.

There were several old vehicles parked outside the I's house, an old camp they were successively remodeling into a year-round home. They pointed out 16-year old Jim, Jr.'s truck, an antique with four brand new tires, which he "hoped to have on the road by fall." Father and son will work together on getting it running, perhaps with the help of some of those old car books. Despite the fact that the I.'s have little money, as soon as Jim, Jr., was old enough to drive, the family had a vehicle for him, ready to be worked on. This is typical in Somerville, partly because of geographic isolation ("If you want to be in things at Williamstown, you need transportation.") and partly because tinkering with old vehicles is a time-honored local pastime. Moving from dirtbikes and 4-wheelers to cars and trucks is something of a rite of passage.

Story Telling

During the I. interview, many family stories were told. Both parents came from large, close-knit families, and the importance of that was repeated and invoked to explain the closeness of this family. To illustrate the importance his family had attached to education and to reading, in particular, Jim told the story of his grandfather, who came from Italy, and could read no English.

J.I.: 'Course he learned to speak English . . . and so every night he would read the newspaper. He never missed a night. Well, we never realized he couldn't read a word of English 'til one night Pop come home from work and there was Gramps with his paper (holds up hands to act out holding the newspaper) . . . and it was upside down! The paper was upside down.

Everyone enjoyed this familiar story and there was some banter about who's the best storyteller in the family. Someone said 12-year old R. tells a lot of stories, and Nicole said "he exaggerates." Jim said they gave him an award at the tannery—"Storyteller of the Year." He laughed when I asked him about it.

D.B.: Where do you get your stories?

J.I.: These guys. Just . . . things the family has done.

D.B.: Where else do you get stories?

J.I.: Well, like the post office (names the postmistress) (all laugh). Riverside Cafe at breakfast//

N.I.: Porter's. (Local general store with a woodstove and chairs in one corner) You know people hang there and play cards . . . You can find out anything you want to know at Porter's.

Although the I. family doesn't have one, many families in Somerville use CB scanners, like their forebears may have used the newspaper, to keep abreast of local happenings, and, perhaps, to feel included in an up-to-date, informed citizenry. Stories so generated are tales of local news or potential news, town gossip, personal experience stories about other people's experiences. These are important stories, because they concern police and fire department matters. People tell stories about their own experiences and those of their children, about sporting events, weather-related incidents, and about work and school, often about standing up to authority.

One common theme in everyday Somerville stories is hunting, perhaps because the hunting season has an impact on the lives of all residents, regardless of age or gender, from summer's end through Christmas. Hunting tips and tales appear in print in the local paper and in sporting magazines. On a more personal level, stories about hunting are told in school, in local bars, at home, and in the Somerville beauty shop. In his discussion of truthfulness and lying in folktales, Bauman (1986) asserts that "hunting has always been a privileged domain for tall tales" (p.18). Indeed, one tale encountered in Somerville was a retelling of the classic "Marvelous Hunt," brought back to school by fifth graders who heard it told by a folklorist at a conservation field day event. This is a story told as a personal narrative in which the hunter has calamitous experiences which result in an incredible harvest of wildlife by amusing accident (Williams, 1992; Bauman, 1986; Ward, 1990) (see Appendix B).

Most Somerville hunting stories are closer to real life, yet they retain their potential for providing entertainment, as well as for reaffirming important themes such as social identity, coming of age, intergenerational bonding, and gender solidarity. While the full range of such stories and their analysis would comprise a separate study, this kind of talk gives a glimpse of local culture which can inform the present work. Typical hunt stories afford the hunter a chance to command attention, and to entertain, give information, brag, and poke fun at others and, occasionally, at himself. While admitting to having been lost or outsmarted by wild game animals "might seem to expose one to some risk of losing face, that risk is apparently offset by the reportability and performance value of a good story" (Bauman, 1986, p.25).

Echoes of hunters' tales are heard in the talk of primary grade boys who report on the exploits of older family members. One first grader told his teacher he had eaten "bear meat for breakfast," and seemed to relish the interest it might stir in her and the other students. While it turned out not to be exactly true, it was probably a duplication of playful talk from home, and it provided a chance for the boy to launch a story of family prowess in what the teacher had intended as talk of breakfast and morning routines. "Going with Dad" is a popular topic, and teachers sometimes complain that students who know nothing about their schoolwork remember exact details of their hunting trips and of the intricate regulations governing the season. Often this is accurate, specific knowledge, but sometimes it takes the form of preoccupation with fantasy, as in the case of one third grader, who concocted endless tall tales in which his father "got another buck yesterday."

The stories told by children share many features with adult narratives, e.g. reference to shared geographical landmarks, indistinct to an outsider, like the "long level," "the north vly," "the ridge," and a "stand of pines." ("You know that big rock down there?") Chief among the similarities is that the children use these opportunities to command attention, to brag, to entertain, and to declare their inclusion in traditional family and community activities. Sometimes these stories are adopted for use in the classroom as experience stories or topics for student writing. Sometimes, however, teachers say students are so distracted by the excitement of their real-life stories, (or the anxiety, in the case of domestic stories) that "they have no room in their heads for the stories we're reading in class."

The following portion of a conversation in the Somerville beauty shop, touches on a popular topic, the contrast between locals and "city slickers." It ends with a view of one traditional role of women in the hunting scheme, namely, qualifying for a license just to obtain an extra tag (allowing the taking of an extra buck) for use by their partners or other family members.

A.V.: My husband's been hunting, fishing, and trapping up here for 48 years.

S.H.: Well some of 'em [from the city] come up to the hotel and just set in the bar. Do all their hunting from a barstool. (Laughs)

A.V.: With some of 'em that's where they should stay. We're better off. They don't know what they're doin' in the woods, and it ends up costing the locals time and effort when they end up in some gully where they shouldn't have gone.

(Some talk about the danger of inexperienced or foolish hunters "walkin' around with guns." The following refers to stories the hunters bring home, sometimes of city slickers, and sometimes tales of victory.)

A.V.: They never stop. It's not so bad the first time you hear it. It's when you're eating the meat, and they're still killing it for the 20th time!

D.B.: And with every detail.

A.V.: Yeah, how it was coming at 'em, and how they outsmarted it, on and on. And just where they were . . .

V.S.: One time they decided we should get our licenses, so we went to the hunters' class—me, Anita, Libby, 5 in all—and we paid attention as much as possible. 'Course we weren't going to go hunting. They just wanted us to have it for the tags. But there was this one girl in the class—I think it was one of the Websters—and so we asked her, "Do you hunt?" and she said, "Does a bear shit in the woods?" (All laugh)

Talk then turned to stories of the Webster woman and how tough she was, including the fact that one year she lived in a tent with her four children. This is old fashioned talk, and times are changing with regard to female participation in hunting, as evidenced by increased attendance at hunters' safety training of females who plan to hunt, and by stories like the one in the local newspaper, "Peggy Bags a Buck," about a 16-year old Somerville girl getting her first deer.

Reference to city folks who don't know their way around in the woods is a common way of reaffirming social identity, based on shared knowledge of local lore, and on a sense of difference from mainstreamers. It is a chance to compare people along criteria which differ sharply from those typically used to measure worth in mainstream America. Social status in this context is not tied to career, economic, or educational achievement. Knowledge of the ways of the woods is a valued resource here, and there is more to be gained from the contrast with city people than a few laughs at their expense. Some years, when the hotels have been booked with hunters from downstate for opening weekend, a "bunch of guys up north" have taken a deer before the start of the season and hung it in cold storage. (This is risky, since it is illegal and carries a stiff fine, if caught by authorities.) Downstate hunters "will pay good money, big money" for the deer, spend the entire weekend in the comfort of the bar, and then "tie it on the roof of their car and away they go, just as if they shot it themselves."

Some stories told by women poke fun at the hunters' foibles or tell of their own adventures as a group when the men are away. Bartenders have stories of hunters who have become lost in the woods, leaving valuables behind as they became too exhausted to carry them, or losing their gear to bears or, in the case of a canoe expedition, to unexpected rapids. A favorite true story is about a very large bear which came hunting a local innkeeper's snowmobile, since there was a bottle of blackberry brandy in the saddle bag. The bear tore the snowmobile apart and rolled it down an embankment, and eventually had to be trapped and relocated by the state conservation department.

During the fall, men active in the hunting scene repeat realistic stories about their exploits, preferably to each other, but agreeably to anyone who will listen. These stories typically revolve around elements common to the experience of all Adirondack hunters: the hunt itself, escapades in hunting camp, or tales of encounters with "outsiders," not versed in the ways of the woods. The hunters' talk includes detail, like the sounds of chattering squirrels, and even simile: "the frozen leaves were like potato chips." These devices rely on the listener's understanding of what it is like to try to move soundlessly through the silent woods. Such details allow the listener to "be there," and the teller to relive the experience, but neither one gives a thought to the literary merit of these stories. Their purpose is sometimes entertainment, sometimes the passing on of information (location of runways, what type of buck lure is favored). Unlike school stories, there is no analysis or evaluation, other than occasional comment on credibility ("You're full of it!"). And there is no emphasis on remembering, since the best stories are told over and over.

Hunting stories are often tales of triumph, sometimes a chance to enjoy a laugh on self or others, occasionally the vehicle for reaffirming a local identity different from and superior to that of city people. With 78 years of living in the Adirondacks mellowing his perspective, an "old-timer" who lived alone in a tiny one-room cabin way up north told me about his first hunt. He seemed to enjoy thinking back to memories of long ago, and "revisiting" places that were special to him. He told of initiation into a special relationship with the mountains, and lamented the decreasing role of the woods in the lives of young people, and the loss of appreciation for nature and the wilderness once passed down from father to son. His stories were like his home, at once spare and ample.

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What he called "the first time I went hunting" turned out to be an outing with his father and a toy gun, and it made a lasting impression, as this telling shows.

J.B.: My father took me and my brother way, way out into the woods. Up along the vly there (waves his hand). And I had one of those guns had a loop . . . like this . . . and . . . we walked and we walked, and we were tryin' to be as quiet as possible . . . And so finally I said, "Well, what are we huntin'?" And he said, "Everything!" And you know our eyes was about that big, and we were scared. We were about five or six years old at the time.

Jack talked about how much the woods had to offer people in the way of beauty and peace and quiet, besides food and wood. Although his house had neither electricity nor indoor plumbing, he said "I have everything I need." Sitting in his living room area you could see the Winchester hanging over his bed and a stack of crossword puzzles from the newspaper which he said he worked every night, "religiously." There was also a small television powered for about two hours at a time by a car battery, later recharged by exchanging it with the one in his car. I was curious about a pair of wire hoops like nooses hanging from a ceiling beam just over the woodstove, and he seemed genuinely amused as he said, "Why I'm amazed someone as smart as you doesn't know what those are for." They were for hanging boots upside down to dry.

While life in Somerville is outside the mainstream and retains some of the old ways lost in faster-paced, middle-class metropolitan America, it, too, is changing, and Jack's concern with changing ways, set, as it is, in the north woods, beyond the reach of electricity, points out the importance and relativity of context.

J.B.: The parents don't teach their kids about the woods anymore. I guess they just don't care about it, or they're too busy. You know, I think it's kinda important.

Writing

In Somerville, non-schooled writing is an important mediator of daily activities, both in and outside of school. Except for the perfunctory writing involved in filling out forms to qualify for jobs or social benefits, the overwhelming majority of writing is for interpersonal communication, usually in the form of letters and notes. At school, notes passed between students take the place of talking when that is prohibited, as in some classrooms, or when there is a need to keep the message secret. Parents send written notes to school to provide excuses for absence, or special instructions regarding where a child should be dropped off after school. Teachers send letters and notes home to parents regarding the needs of their children, upcoming events at school, or behavior problems.

For the families without telephone service, these written communiques are especially critical. (A home visit is sometimes the only sure way for teachers to communicate with parents, since a few Somerville parents cannot read.)

Letter writing is not a widely reported activity outside of school, but there are some circumstances in which it becomes paramount. During the period of field research for the present study, for instance, there were two military actions in which Somerville residents served overseas. These occasions brought letter writing to the forefront of community activity as people of all ages wrote to soldiers and waited for their letters to bring word about how they were faring and what it was like "over there." Letters received from the Persian Gulf War and, later, from "Operation Hunger" in Somalia, fueled local conversation and newspaper reports.

Perhaps because of the import of these situations, letter writing to and from the battle zones became an area where schooled and non-schooled endeavors meshed. Concerned citizens provided school officials with names and overseas addresses of Somerville servicemen. Teachers helped students write and send letters of encouragement and support and made time to read and discuss letters received.

Arrangements for the letter exchange illustrate the perception of the townspeople that the school is the central agency of the community, as well as the commitment of teachers to incorporate and draw on non-school matters of significance for classroom activities.

Fifth graders were especially involved with this effort as an extension of their well-developed pen pal program. They regularly exchange correspondence with local senior citizens and with fifth graders from a school in Williamstown. This gives them a chance to write for a real purpose to a real audience. One of the most poignant of this project's observations took place when word came that one of the servicemen had been killed by sniper fire (*Newsweek*, March 11, 1991). The sergeant's letter had just arrived and the girl who was his pen pal was about to share it with her classmates, unaware that it would be his last. The teacher broke the news gently and talked it over quietly with the student, who chose to go ahead and read her letter to the class. The teacher, whose role in the classroom seemed greatly expanded that day, later told me that "this is part of life," and it is a part that he and his students encounter not infrequently, since many of their senior pen pals are quite old and they "lose a few from time to time."

Outside of school, letter writing may be used for doing business with official agencies, although most respondents felt that they would prefer to call or go there in person. In evaluating the usefulness of things learned in school, R.G., the truck driver, referred to letter writing as a skill he uses, and indirectly to English instruction as enabling him to express himself and "make it sound good."

R.G.: Well, there's some things at school has paid off. You know, the arithmetic part of it, the English . . . writing a letter or something. I've had to write letters for getting in trouble and stuff, gotta explain myself. Just had to write one for an off-duty cop in Ft. Hill, said I went around a corner on two wheels down there. I got 18 wheels . . . I said what did I do with the other 16?

D.B.: Oh no.

R.G.: I got a verbal . . . I forget what the hell they call it . . . it's still in my file, that I went around the corner, so I wrote a letter to go with it. And there was an on-duty cop right on that same corner and if I was going so bad, why didn't he chase me? So I argued with that, and nothing I can do about it.

D.B.: Except that you know how to write your letter.

R.G.: Oh yeah. You can't just write something stupid. You gotta, you know, you gotta make it sound good. You don't want him to think you're a real moron. You know. Anybody can drive a truck, I know that, but still.

More

Additional literacy activities outside of school include practical inscription at home, record keeping at work, and the creation and use of written materials for amusement, as well as the study of texts in non-school classrooms. At home, people write lists and copy recipes, and they note babies' birth weights and other significant family data in albums. Bills and other notices that come in the mail are read and dispersed. Refrigerator doors display messages of love and information about appointments and little league games, and catalogues provide a reminding link with the material world. At work, people read medical charts and delivery rosters, write up invoices, and file bills of lading. Workers on one shift make a log entry to let the next shift know the status of ongoing work, and they "look up a part in the catalogue or on the computer."

The writing and reading of short texts for amusement is an undercurrent both in school and on the job. Such texts generally focus on topics of local and personal interest, and range from one-liners and captions to poetry and song parody. Underground amusement texts in school include "mad-libs," where proper nouns and adjectives are used to fill in blanks in commercial texts to create funny stories about one's classmates. Students also make "slang" or "slam" books, which they pass around for others to write in, categorizing and rating classmates on various criteria. While touted as harmless amusement, mean-spirited use of such materials often causes hard feelings and fights. One amusement text confiscated from a seventh grader was an explicit, off-color, rhyming song parody into which names of teachers and students had been inserted.

Humorous texts brought home from the knitting and leather mills include a poem entitled "Ode to PMS," a mock application for living in the Adirondack Park, and a cartoon featuring venison and marital discord. Such materials mimic official forms, replacing political or literary content with an amusing take on personal and local experience (see Appendix C).

A bumper strip displayed in the window of a pickup truck reads "Work is for those who don't know how to fish." All these texts revolve around common referents, everyday concerns and shared experience, presented succinctly and overtly. Content takes precedence over form, and merit derives from immediacy and easy access.

Non-School Classrooms

Finally, text materials are used as the focus of instruction in the non-school classrooms of hunters' safety training and snowmobile safety training. Each of these training courses, comprised of three nights of instruction (a total of about nine hours) with a written test at the end, uses a manual with dense text, frequent headings and subheadings, graphs, charts, numbered lists, and illustrations. The 88-page Northeast Regional Hunters' Education Manual (Hunter Education Administrators, 1987) and the 47-page Snowmobile Education Manual (New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, 1984) are both published by Outdoor Empire Publishing Company and their formats are similar. They are packed with factual information and much of the print is smaller than standard type.

Each chapter identifies key vocabulary words with their definitions and ends with a set of review questions. The final test in the hunters' course consists of 50 short answer questions—34 multiple choice and 16 true-false. The snowmobile test has 60 true-false questions, 30 items to identify from pictures, and 10 multiple choice, in addition to a performance evaluation. Both training programs stress the stated objective of safety education and personal responsibility. According to the hunters' manual:

> [t]he purpose of the Hunter Education program is to promote responsible, ethical hunter conduct; emphasize the importance of wildlife management, laws, and regulations; and to encourage the safe handling of hunting equipment. Students will take on a better understanding of their obligations to the resources, landowner, other hunters, and to themselves. (p. 87)

It is necessary to attend every session of these classes and pass the tests in order to acquire a hunting license. The same is true for a snowmobile operator's certificate, although this is only required for operation by minors. The majority of Somerville youth and those from the surrounding area attend these courses as young teenagers. The fact that virtually everyone is successful in these classes, and that they attend by choice, rather than by mandate, suggests that these would be interesting places to observe local students engaged and motivated in ways not typically seen at school. As one of the hunting class instructors said, "This is important to them. It's something they care about." I wanted to see how students of wide-ranging age and ability levels were able to master what I judged to be significant amounts of rather difficult material during the three-day sessions. How did these teachers help students, some of them failing in school, achieve total success here, in terms of outcomes? I expected to see substantial differences between what went on here and standard fare at school, particularly in terms of student engagement.

Hunters' Safety Training was held on three August evenings at the Spruce Tree Rod and Gun Club. The classroom held 60 folding chairs, set up in rows, with a large table in the front of the room and a large poster pad on an easel in one corner that said, "New York State Hunter Education Program." The room filled gradually with a motley assortment of mostly young people, many wearing dirty work clothes and about one-fourth in well-worn baseball caps. Students had preregistered for the session at a local sporting goods store, and now they signed up again at the front, showing either a birth certificate or driver's license. A new law allowed children as young as twelve to hunt small game, and most of them were accompanied by fathers or grandfathers, who stayed with them until sign-up was complete. There were eleven females, some very young, and three mothers with their sons. One of the mothers who stayed told me she was not here to take the course, as she had already taken it eight years ago. She was here merely to sit with her 12-year-old and "help him with his attention span, which isn't too long. My husband was supposed to do this!" The instructor began by setting some ground rules:

G.S.: The teachers are all volunteers. There will be more classes if the next two are this full. We're not teaching hunting . . . We're teaching safety. Turn to your manuals—page one—you'll see the hunter's responsibility. If you have questions, raise your hand. Since we're all volunteers, we won't put up with disruptions. Everybody understand that? If you have a problem . . . hearing disability, reading disability . . . let one of the instructors know.

He went on to describe the book's set-up, "The gray area gives the major words for each section," and to tell students, "You own the book—bring it back with you tomorrow." Then he read aloud from the manual, section by section, stopping for an occasional anecdote. Sometimes he stopped to ask a question, and if there was no response, he answered it himself and went on.

This format varied only for the showing of a film on turkey hunting and a demonstration of handling firearms. Each chapter had a set of review questions at the end, and the instructor went over these with the class, but they were never required to do them ahead of time, or, for that matter, to fill them in at all. The instructor delivered broad hints about exam questions to mark the importance of certain points for students. For example he introduced and concluded discussion of the use of a safety by referring to their being asked about it.

G.S.: If you're ever asked "Is it safe to just put on the safety?" our answer is "No.". . . So, if you're ever asked . . . OK? Most likely you'll hear this question again tonight.

As the instructor read from the manual, some students followed along, but some just listened. One boy who appeared to be about 14 or 15 years old wore a tank top and had a large, snakey tatoo on his back. He sat each night with a pack of Marlboros on his manual, which was closed on the floor under his chair, and just looked around the room. Three very young boys in the back of the room shared a manual. As the middle boy held the book open, the other two fiddled with the corners of the pages and wrote in ballpoint pen on his newly-shaved head. Other youngsters doodled and colored in their books. Even with a short break for sodas or smokes, the three-hour sessions produced yawns, stretches, and drooping eyelids. An old air conditioner droned continuously, making it hard to hear. As the hour got later, most of the students looked bored and tired, some checked their watches, and some held their heads in their hands. One boy nodded off and his pen dropped to the floor. During review questions, the mother of the 12-year-old reached over his arm to mark the answers in his book and turn the pages. Students whispered to each other, one pair discussing who had won what belt on World Wrestling Federation. Only a few actually participated when shown how to hold their hands up and determine their "master eye," even though they were encouraged to "go ahead and try it."

Reiterating their concern that students not be denied a hunting license just because of poor reading skills, the head instructor told students to let them know if they have a problem.

G.S.: Tomorrow, when we take the test, if anybody has any kind of learning disability or reading problem, let us know. I'll take you out and read the questions to you. Don't just mark down anything and fail the test just because you have a reading problem. You know, I had a friend in high school who thought he was a slow reader, then he found out he was partially dyslexic. It's nothing to be ashamed of.

When asked if he anticipated more problems with the test this time due to the addition of younger children, G.S. said he didn't know, this being the first class with 12-year-olds. But, he said, "There's always a group that needs help." The implication was that they get it, because he said they had only had two students repeat the course in the many sessions given over the last ten years. He told me the make-up of the class had changed somewhat over the years, especially regarding participation of females.

G.S.: "Used to be women just came to get the extra tag, but now more and more women are hunting with their husbands. If he's gonna be out there, if they're ever gonna see him, they have to go hunting."

The Snowmobile Safety class, held at the Somerville firehouse, followed the same format as the hunters' class—three evenings, 7-10 p.m., with volunteer teachers, members of the local snowmobile club. Like the instructors at the Spruce Tree Club, these instructors urged students not to be afraid to ask questions. "There's no such thing as a dumb question." They told students that others might have the same question but might be afraid to ask because "someone might make fun of them." This class was much smaller, with only eleven students, ages 10 to 16, sitting at tables arranged in a U-shape. Two of the young teenagers were "problem students" at school. Here, a visit from the Environmental Conservation Officer and a chance to identify parts on a big brand-new red snowmachine supplemented reading aloud from the manual, still the main activity. This time, students read in round robin style. ("Turn to page 12. Starting here, at this table, I want each of you to read a paragraph.") As one student read, only four of the others followed along, the rest just looked around the room. When the reader had difficulty, others quickly whispered prompts. The instructor made no corrections on miscues, but did provide words if the reader stopped.

Occasionally instructors asked questions and a few students raised their hands to respond. If a student gave a wrong answer, the instructor didn't try to "lead" the student to a better answer. He just said, "No," and went on to ask another student. As the evening wore on, students slid down in their seats, held their heads in their hands, stretched and yawned. Like the students at the Rod and Gun Club, they appeared bored and fatigued, not, as I had expected, engaged and motivated.

Analysis

Voluntary attendance and totally successful outcomes for students of wide-ranging ability and age indicate that there is something to be learned from the non-school classrooms. However, observations and interviews revealed that the important differences between school and non-school classes were not to be found in classroom pedagogy, nor in the texts and their uses. Rather, there is an array of surrounding factors, having to do with purpose and orientation, with local preferences and customs, which can be seen in reflection to be quite different in the two settings.

While the head instructor at the hunters' course credited their successful outcomes to the fact that students were "more interested in what we do here" than they are in school, students told me they did well because "it's easy," and "I knew most all that stuff before I came here. Everybody does." This fit with the view of the snowmobile instructors, H.D. and H.S., who were very candid in their attributions for student success, as seen in the following interview segment.

H.D.: Kids know all this stuff before they come to the class. Around here, they've all been ridin' for years already . . . since they were . . . (gestures) this high. From the time they're big enough you can prop 'em up on a machine, they been ridin'.

D.B.: Well do kids ever raise their hand during the test and say, "What's this word?" or say they can't read the question?

H.D.: Oh, once in a while they'll say they don't understand the question, and we'll help 'em.

This was the smallest class they'd had in the three years these young men have been teaching the course. They said they've never had the situation where someone couldn't read. They are lifelong Somerville residents, and H.S., who never completed high school himself, added an extra thought about student success:

H.S.: Kids need 75 to pass on the test. They say its easy, just common sense. Just about everybody passes . . . Once in a while, somebody needs an extra point or two, so we give it to them. You're a teacher. You know how to fix the points so they pass. (Laughs)

In both of these classrooms, there is a sense that student success probably has little to do with classroom practice. Even the hunters' instructor acknowledged that real life situations eclipse classroom learnings, as he told me that no matter what they do in class, "Kids are going to learn from whoever they hunt with. If they hunt with a safe hunter, they'll learn good practices, and if not, they won't."

Parents and grandparents accompany children, even teenagers, to these classes, and stay at least long enough to make sure the students get checked in properly. These training sessions represent rites of passage into valued activities shared by generations. The elders feel comfortable in the Rod and Gun Club and the firehouse, and this process initiates the young into a community to which their family and friends belong. The academic focus of school, on the other hand, aims to initiate the young into a community to which they (the parents and grandparents) do not themselves belong.

The text is met with as little interest in these non-school classrooms as any text in school, but here, there seems to be little interest or engagement required. The text serves merely as a reference, an outline used to delineate which topics are to be discussed and which will appear on the exam. The purpose here is to endure the sessions and pass the test, and 75% is as good as 100%. There is no sorting or ranking of students or their performances, such as exists in the academic hierarchy. There is just passing, wherein everyone (every performance) is as good as any other, compatible with the non-hierarchical arrangements of Somerville. (In school, when students who are capable of more do barely enough to pass, teachers see this as a problem. Students often do not.) Further, content is all-important here, just the "fact text," with no need to navigate the murky waters of style, form or aesthetics. And students bring to their understanding of that content a cultural background of historical knowledge, terminology, strategy and disposition adequate to the task.

Youngsters who appeared bored and fatigued in the non-schooled classrooms nevertheless maintained behavior that was within acceptable limits longer than might have been expected in school. This is probably due to several factors revealed through the present study. Foremost is the fact that success in the non-school classrooms leads to something seen as needed, wanted, and important for social status, not necessarily true of school achievement. Beyond that, success here consists of passing a test which measures how much one knows about things which are valued and which most locals have known "for years already." This is a very straightforward situation with clearly understood, shared purposes. At school, one encounters many layers of endeavor, and many of the purposes of the institution are not shared by students and their families. Finally, of course, students know that the training courses last only three days and that if they misbehave they will have to leave, in which case, they stand to lose a great deal. By contrast, school is long-term, making it necessary to develop the relief of alternate (underground) pursuits within the school framework (Willis, 1977). Currently, there is very little chance of being forced to leave school because of misbehavior, and, in any case, faced with that risk, many Somerville students feel they have nothing to lose.

CONCLUSION

Literacy and Purpose

Literacy is seen to exist within a social and cultural context, and its definitions are varied and changeable. Like school achievement generally, literacy practices and literacy learning are given meaning by the perceived benefits they make available to individuals and society. Literacy acquisition begins long before a child enters school, and knowledge of the social and practical purposes for reading and writing precedes skill development (Sulzby, 1986). Likewise, literacy learning among older children is enhanced when it is perceived to be socially and economically functional and rewarded (Ogbu, 1987). In the same way, academic achievement in general is likely to be the product of an environment in which it is seen to pay off. Much of what is known about student success has to do with personal investment of time and effort aimed at a meaningful goal. In writing, it is called "ownership." In reading, students are urged to be strategic, and to monitor their own comprehension. Even with direct instruction, the last and critical step is internalization, with students taking over responsibility for their own learning. Self-guided learning depends on intentions, perceptions, and attributions of learners (Paris, Lipson, and Wixson, 1983, p.305). Skilled readers and purposeful learners use strategies by making choices.

Intentionality and purpose are paramount for learning and for academic achievement in school. Psychologists have shown how expectancies, aspirations, values, and beliefs can establish goals and direct agents' behavior (Paris, Lipson, and Wixson, 1983, p.305). The critical role and complex nature of personal volition is under-recognized in discussions of the educational problems of students "at risk."

Since realities faced by families in the job market and in the workplace have a dynamic influence on the language, culture, knowledge, and social relations of the home, work plays an important role in the creation of cultural capital conveyed by adults to their children. Cultural capital includes not only knowledge and skills, but orientations and evaluative notions which influence strategic decisions (Bourdieu, 1982). Findings from Somerville parallel those of Ogbu (1987), indicating that people understand what is required for academic achievement valued in schools, but often choose not to pursue it. Likewise, they often understand that educational achievement is requisite to higher level jobs and career arrangements, but choose to pursue other, often easier and more familiar, ways of providing for themselves and their families. These are practical decisions, based on what might be likened to an informal sort of cost-benefit analysis.

In both school and non-school settings, literacy is used for particular purposes, and there are specific demands placed by the community upon its members regarding specific texts. In both places, there are certain ways for reading certain texts, based on shared purposes of community members. The practical understandings about work and social arrangements in poor communities are antecedent to children's encounter with school, and they appear in their skepticism about many school tasks, including those associated with literacy and literature. Somerville children do not come to school without prior experiences of literature and reading, but their experiences place reading in the sphere of autonomous, purposeful, flexible activity characteristic of community life. Reading may be part of a search for ideas and information tied to other practical activities (home and vehicle repairs, crafts, hobby collecting), where it is content, not form, that matters. Adult readers may be concerned with whether a novel is realistic, but they are not concerned with literary-critical notions such as character development. Their texts and their social relations through texts suggest a world in which the practical is antecedent to, and, perhaps, antagonistic to the scholastic or the aesthetic, as these are usually understood (Brandau & Collins, 1992).

Implications for Education

Educators and students are caught in a bind where we begin with the premise that everyone can and should be successful in school, proceed to move through a system where that is not possible, and finally blame teachers and schools, along with students, for what is perceived as school failure. Mass meritocratic schooling was probably born of egalitarian impulse, but merit is judged through competition and everyone is measured with the same stick, regardless of locally different purposes and values. Along the way, that measurement serves a gatekeeping function whereby, subsequently, differing students are often said to receive different schooling. Goldman and McDermott (1987) have described the problem of competition in schools for students:

> They will be asked not just to learn to read and write, but to learn to read and write better than their peers. Nationally, there will be only so much success that can be passed around. By the dictates of the bell curve, an arbitrary cultural device that pits all persons against each other, half the children can pass, and the rest must fail (p. 295).

One of the most frequently cited educational problems of children in poverty is that they attend bad schools. While this is often the case, focusing on the shortcomings of deficient schools is just as ineffectual as concentrating on the "deficits" of particular students. The Somerville School is arguably the best school in its section of the Adirondacks, as can be quickly sensed during casual observation, and as evidenced by state test scores at the elementary level. Here, well-qualified, committed faculty work in a clean, safe, well-equipped facility helping youngsters achieve early literacy learning in literature-based language arts classrooms. All the teachers know all the students. There is no tracking, and all students receive free lunch, "so as to avoid any possible stigma associated with free and reduced lunch tickets." Virtually all elementary students learn to read. Yet, despite early success, as children grow older, family and peer influences, along with community norms, orchestrate a disengagement from schoolwork and from the pursuit of academic achievement as an avenue of social and economic mobility.

This situation points out the need for more ethnographic research to inform educational policy and practice, a need described by Connell, et. al. (1982):

> The characteristics-of-institutions, then, do not provide us with an explanation of inequality any more adequate than characteristics-of-individuals. The problem is fundamentally the same: in both cases the question is set up as a search for the factors (conceived of as discreetly measurable entities) whose influences carry the most weight. . . . It is not surprising that an approach so much at odds with the reality of the situation should lead to the appalling intellectual muddle we find in recent books written within the Inequality Approach, and should lead to no useful advice for teachers. What is perhaps surprising is that academics keep on doing it (p. 187)

Before school reform can address the needs of educationally and economically disadvantaged students, there must be a radical rethinking of such notions as success and equal opportunity, and of the relations between schooling and work. We must also take a realistic look at the American economy. "If we do not act on the conditions outside education at the same time as we act on those inside, we will have little success" (Apple, 1986, p.121). Changes in the educational achievement of students require changes in the basic organization of work and reward in our society. If we want people outside the mainstream of American society to choose to pursue "academic achievement" or to "engage with literature," we need an environment where such choices will truly make them better off in terms of purposes and rewards which have meaning *for them*.

Understanding how real-life experiences in marginal communities engender beliefs, social arrangements, and cultural practices which go against mainstream assumptions about schooling and work is only a beginning. It is not enough to construe equality of opportunity as acceptance of and compensation for differing backgrounds in pursuit of mainstream educational and career goals. Individuals need to follow different paths to different destinations. Schools must be allowed to help diverse groups of Americans to pursue their own goals, based on values and purposes which have meaning for them, acknowledging the true requirements of their real-life situations.

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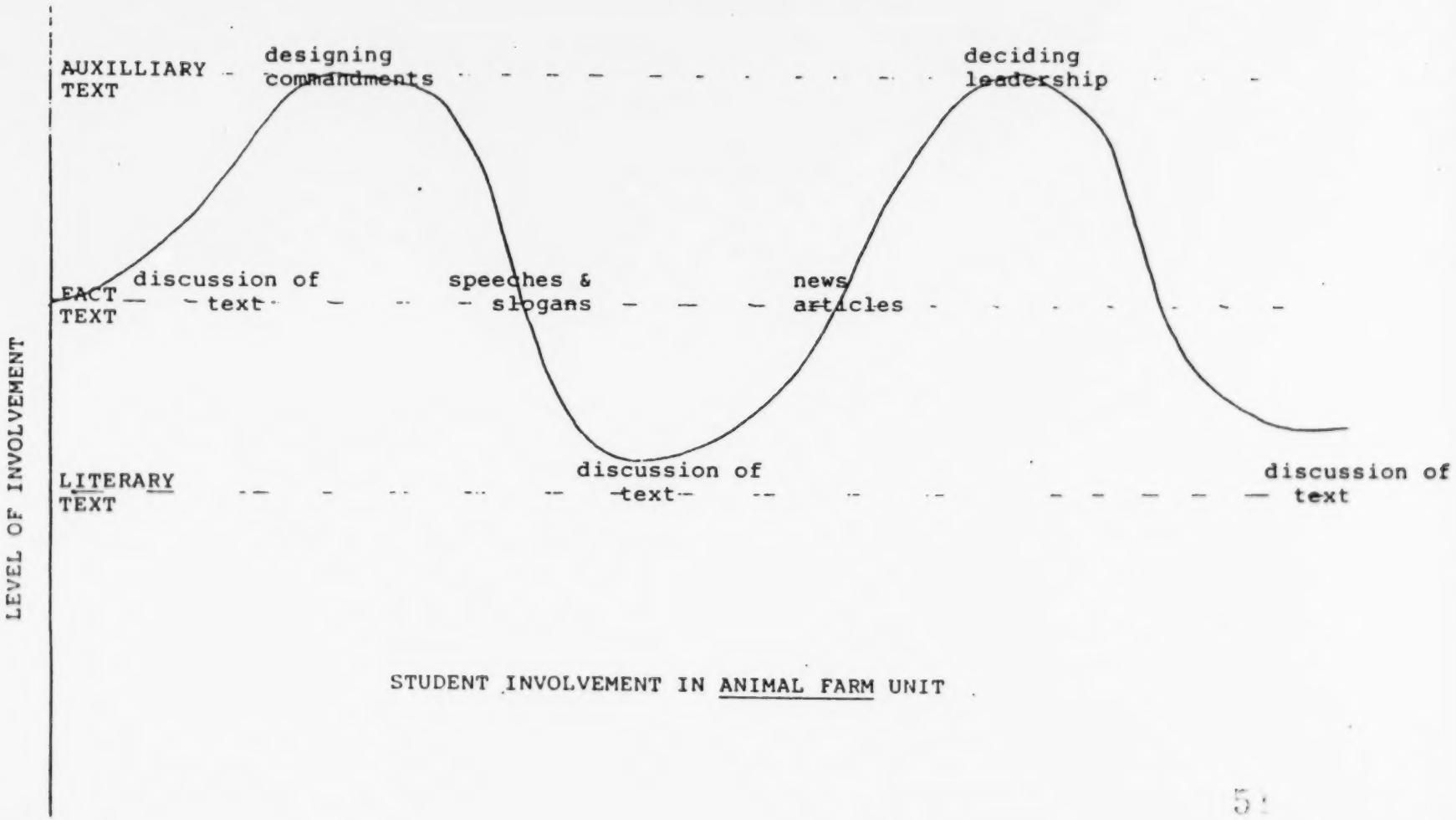
APPENDIX A



STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN ANIMAL FARM UNIT

UNCLE CHARLEY'S HUNTIN' TRIP

We lived way back up there in The Featherbed, y'know, and there was a lot of characters lived up in the woods, different old hermits and different people that lived back up in the woods. One of these fellas was named Uncle Charley. At least that's what we called him, anyway. And Charley lived way back in there in a log cabin and it was a nice little cabin. And out in front he had a pond there that used to be a brook but the beavers had dammed it up and made it into a beautiful spring pond. And out behind there there was a couple a acres of land that he kept mowed by hand with a scythe all the time and in the middle of that meadow there was a little garden. Charley always had a nice garden there every year and he would raise all kinds of vegetables. He would have potatoes and corn and cabbages and all that stuff.

This one particular year nothin' seemed to grow right because it rained pretty near all summer long and Charley's vegetables just didn't amount to anything. He went to get his corn and the little ears on the corn wasn't hardly any bigger than your thumb. He went to get his squash and his pumpkins and the mice had gone right in one side and out the other, ruined all that. Then he decided he would dig his potatoes and there wasn't any of them bigger'n a hen's egg. And he was really discouraged and disgusted and didn't know what he was goin' to do for food for the winter.

So he was sittin' there in his cabin one night thinkin' over the whole business and he's rockin' back and forth and the lamp's lit there on the wall and as he's rockin' he noticed on the other wall this old muzzle-loadin' gun he'd had when he was a kid hung there on a couple pegs. It'd been there for about forty years and of course Charley didn't hunt much anymore so the gun just hung there. And he was thinkin, "I wonder if that old gun would still shoot? If it would, I'd take it down and fix it up and take it out and maybe I could get a deer or something? Or a bear or whatever. I'd get anything I could get."

And so he takes the gun down and he checks the lock all out on it and looks it all over and it looks like it would work all right. And he run a ramrod down the barrel there and it seemed to be all right. So he went into his drawers in his bedroom and he threw all of his clothes out of there and way back in the corner he found some black powder and some lead balls and some stuff there. He brings that out and he put some black powder down that barrel and he ripped a little chunk off his shirttail and wrapped that lead ball in it and he spit on that a couple times and he stuck in that barrel and he rammed it down there with a ramrod. And he got that gun all ready to shoot. And he put it there in the corner and he says, "There, in the mornin' I'll get up bright and early and I'll see if I can't get somethin' t' eat."

Bright and early in the mornin' he got up. He took his old gun and his sandwiches and he went off up through towards Grass River and all the way up that upper tote road and he snuck along there and took his time,- still-hunted a little bit. Then he'd sit down there and wait and he sat by one of the best deer trails up there and he still didn't see anything. And he was gettin' more discouraged than ever now and he went up along towards Grass River and he stopped there at noon time and had his lunch. Then he went along down the river and up back down across into the lower tote road and just about dusk he come out through that lower tote road and out into that little meadow, right in back of the camp.

The haze was jes' lifting off that meadow and there was just light enough left so you could see clear over to where the cabin was. And over there, on the right hand side, he thought he caught the glimpse of somethin' movin' over by the big rock ledge. And just as he looked out through there this big doe raised her head up! And boy, he saw her and he got that gun up and he thought "Boy, if I could get that big doe that would give me some meat for winter." So he cocked that gun back and he's all

ready to shoot that big doe and all of a sudde
on the other side of that rock ledge he though
he saw somethin' else movin'. Then this grea
big buck raised his head up! He had great bi
horns, he put his head back down to fee
again.

Charley thought, "Boy, if I could get both o
those deer that would really gimme some mea
for the winter."

Now Charley knew that he only had one sho
in that gun, but he was a real fast thinker. An
he noticed that on that rock ledge there was
real sharp spot that come down there. And h
thought, "If I can hit the edge of that sharp
spot I'll split that bullet and kill both of thes
deer!"

So Old Charley he puts that gun up and h
aims at the edge of that rock and he realize
that he's gotta get over there about twenty fee
in order to hit it there on the angle that he'
gotta hit it and split that bullet and kill both o
those deer. He looks over there and he sees that
pond about ten foot away and he realizes that
the least he's gonna get out of this is wet feet.
And Charley's got on a pair of black rubbe
boots that come up just below his knees with
red bands around the top. He's got a pair a big
bib overalls on with big pockets in there and
hooked up on top there. He's got an overall
jacket went over the top of them bib overalls
and it used to button right here in the front,
but then his belly got in the way so it couldn't
hook anymore and it kinda just flopped back
and forth in the breeze. And he had an old
railroad cap on there that he used to have when
he was a young man and he worked on the
railroad and it was pretty old and the card-
board had been stickin' out for about five years
now in that beak and the bottom part of that
where the cloth used to go around was just
hangin down kinda like lookin' through lace
curtains.

Now Charley eased out there and he's got
that gun and he's aimin' at the edge of that rock
and he's getting over. And when the deer
picked their head up he's got to stop no matter
what position he's in. And pretty soon water
starts comin' into that right hand boot and
pretty soon it's comin' into the left hand boot.
And there's water up to his knees and then
there's water up to his belt and of course the
higher that water gets, the colder it gets. And
by the time that water's up here to his chest he's
right exactly where he has to be and he aims at
the edge of that rock and he cocks that gun
back and he looks real careful through there
and he touched that thing off! The smoke
belched out a that thing and it bellered jes like
an old bull! Right through the smoke and fog
and everything he could see both of those deer
fall right over. That gun hadn't been shot in so
long it kicked so hard it knocked him right back
into that pond. And he lost his gun and he lost
his breath. And he come up out of that pond
and he had a beaver in his right hand and a
muskrat in his left hand and his pockets was so
full a trout that a button popped off his fly and
went forty yards through the air and killed a
partridge. And he got his whole winter's meat
right there in one shot. And that's the story of
Uncle Charley's huntin' trip.

"Uncle Charlie's Huntin' Trip" is a brilliantly localized variant of the most widespread of all the Munchhausen tales: "the marvelous hunt." The genius in Smith's telling is in the outrageous contrast between the realistic details in the body of the story and the final explosion into the crescendo of crazy impossibilities. Bill Smith's skill in the control of the pace of the narrative is the mark of a master yarnspinner.

Story told by Bill Smith
and reported by Ward, 1990,
pp.103-109.

Appendix C

Amusement Texts

Thanks for sendin over the deer meat— Beings we aint never had it befer, Paw's havin' the kids ta guess what it is
I'll give ya a hint— it's what yore Ma sometimes calls me
SPIT IT OUT WILLIE! ITS A ASSHOLE

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Application To Live In The Adirondack Park

(Flatlanders Need Not Apply)

Name_____

Nickname_____ C.B. Handle_____

Address (R.F.D. - H.C.R.)_____

Daddy (If unknown, attach list of three suspects):_____

Mama_____

Neck Shade: [ ] Light Red [ ] Medium Red [ ] Dark Red

Number of Teeth Exposed in Full Grin: _____ Upper:_____ Lower:_____

Make of Pickup Owned_____ Size of Tires _____

Number of Empty Beer Cans on Floor of Pickup_____

Truck Equipped With:

[ ] Gun Rack [ ] Mud Flaps [ ] Camper Top [ ] Air Horn
[ ] 8-Track [ ]4-wheel Drive [ ] American Flag [ ] Rust
[ ] Fuzz Buster [ ] Load of Wood [ ] Hijack Sheets [ ] Mud Tires
[ ] Spitoon [ ]Running Bourds [ ] C.B. Antennas [ ] Roll Bar

Bumper Stickers:

[ ] Wave If Your Homey [ ] Abolish the APA
[ ] Almost Heaven, Athol, NY [ ] Where the Hell is Thurman?
[ ] Honk If You Love Jesus [ ] Redman Chewing Tobacco
[ ] Wood Is Wonderful [ ] I Ain't No Flatlander!
[ ] Olds Fart [ ] Save the Black Fly
[ ] All you ecological bastards can freeze to death in the dark!

Favorite Beverage:

[ ] Genesse [ ] Genesse Cream Ale [ ] Black Label [ ] Molson
[ ] Moosehead [ ] Warrensburg Tap Water [ ] Budweiser

Favorite Vocalist:

[ ] Elvis [ ] Conway Twitty [ ] Loretta Lynn
[ ] Slim Whitman [ ] Johnny Cash [ ] Willie Nelson
[ ] Hank Soto [ ] George Jones

Favorite Recreation:

[ ] Square Dancin' [ ] 'Coon Huntin' [ ] Fish'n with LIVE BAIT
[ ] Drankin' [ ] Drankin' [ ] Drankin'
[ ] Blue Grass Fest [ ] Jackin' [ ] Get'n Drunk

Favorite Weapon:

[ ] Tire Iron [ ] Pick Handle [ ] Log Chain

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Number of Hounds: _____ Type: [ ] Blue Tick [ ] Beagle [ ] Black & Tan

Cap Emblem:

[ ] John Deere [ ] Stihl [ ] Genesse [ ] CAT
[ ] GORE [ ] Eat Me [ ] Skoal [ ] Budweiser

Memberships:
[ ] NRA [ ] VFW [ ] PTL Club [ ] Ducks Unlimited
[ ] Fish & Game Club [ ] KKK [ ] Bass Club

Length of Right Leg _____ Length of Left Leg_____

How many cars do you have up on blocks in your front yard?_____

How many kitchen appliances will you keep on your front porch?_____
(Working or Not)

When was your last Elvis sighting?_____

Do you wear mostly polyester pants with snags?_____

Do you own any shoes (not counting boots), if so how many?_____

Are you married to any of the following?

[ ] Sister [ ] Cousin [ ] Cousin's Sister [ ] Sow

Does your wife weigh more than your pickup?_____

Can you sign your name and spell it right every time?_____

Have you ever stayed sober for a whole weekend?_____

Can you count: [ ] Past 10 with your shoes on?
[ ] Past 21 with your fly up?

Have you EVER had more than one bath in a week?_____ Month?_____

Medical Information:

Do you have at least 2 of the following:

[ ] B.O. [ ] Crabs [ ] Head Lice [ ] Bad Breath
[ ] Scabies [ ] Yellow Teeth [ ] Green Teeth [ ] Runny Nose
[ ] Tatoos [ ] Cross Eyed [ ] Stutter [ ] Fleas

Your Signature (One "X" will do)_____ Date_____

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This is the story of the deadly curse

We are writing it down verse by verse

In case you have not been able to guess

We are talking about PMS

I feel like I am in a living hell
As I sit and watch my ankles swell

I feel like my eyeballs are about to float

As pound after pound I begin to bloat

I sit here eating a ton of junkfood

In hopes of curing this ugly bad mood

Because of these cramps I feel a pain
Maybe it's all this water weight gain

I don't like to complain of the pain in my head
By the way that I feel I'ld be better off dead

They tell me I'm crazy they tell me I'm mad
It's times like these I wish I were Dad
I want to scream, I want to shout
For some reason my family wants to move out
Don't bother me get out of my face
I'm no longer part of the human race
I feel so ugly, I should wear a sack
Just think, in 28 days "IT" will be back!